

MINUTE of MEETING of the BATHGATE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST Lothian Council held within CONFERENCE ROOM 14/15, BATHGATE PARTNERSHIP CENTRE, SOUTH BRIDGE STREET, BATHGATE, on 17 SEPTEMBER 2018.

Present – Councillors Harry Cartmill (Chair) and John McGinty

Apologies – Councillor Charles Kennedy

Absent – Councillor Willie Boyle

In attendance -

PC David Arnott, Police Scotland

PC Nadia Munro, Police Scotland

Kenny Stewart, Local Liaison Officer, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Tony Fleming, Grounds Maintenance Manager, West Lothian Council

Nairn Pearson, BID & Town Centre Manager, West Lothian Council

Ronnie McLeod, Bathgate Community Council

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The committee noted that in terms of the council's Scheme of Administration the meeting was inquorate. Nevertheless, the meeting could proceed with only two ward members present but any resolutions made would require to be reported to the Council Executive for ratification before they became effective.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTE

The Committee approved the minute of its meeting held on 11th June 2018. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. POLICE WARD REPORT

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Police Constable Iain Law providing an update on performance, activities and issues across the ward for the period up to 30th June 2018.

The report was presented by Police Constables David Arnott and Nadia Munro and provided information on the Police Scotland National Priorities delivered locally, the West Lothian policing priorities and the ward specific community engagement priorities. It provided an overview of the performance statistics and explained that full information could be accessed via the Police Scotland website.

The report then went on to provide members with full information on the number of crimes recorded, solvency rates, warrants issued, etc., that had taken place across the ward during the reporting period on the following before concluding with contact details for the local police team:-

- Reducing anti-social behaviour;
- Tackling substance misuse;
- Making our roads safer; and
- Preventing violence (in the night time economy).

Arising from the discussion PC Arnott reminded members that the Parksmart Initiative required Head Teachers to take action to address inconsiderate parking at schools through their Junior Road Safety Officers, etc., and that Police Scotland could offer visible support should their actions have no impact on bad parking habits.

PC Arnott advised the committee that he would be taking up a new post at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan in November. On behalf of the committee, the Chair extended his appreciation to PC Arnott for the sterling work he had carried out diligently within the Bathgate community over the years and wished him every success in his new role.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE REPORT

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) providing an update on the activity within Bathgate Multi-Member Ward for the period up to 30th June 2018.

Quarterly reports on the Multi-Member Ward Operational Plans had been produced by SFRS to ensure delivery of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for West Lothian 2014-2017.

The report was presented by Local Liaison Officer Kenny Stewart and provided performance information relating to the work undertaken by the service in the Bathgate ward comparing the number of recorded incidents for 2017-18 to the previous year relating to accidental dwelling fires, fire casualties and fatalities, deliberate fires, fires in non-domestic properties, non-fatal non-fire emergencies and unwanted fire alarm signals for Scotland, West Lothian and the ward.

The Committee was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. SERVICE UPDATE – NETS, LAND & COUNTRYSIDE

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising members of the recent activity of the NET's, Land and Countryside teams for the period 1 May 2018 to 31 July 2018.

The report provided information in relation to Grounds Maintenance, Garden Maintenance, Cleaner Communities Routine Works, Environmental Community Action, Parks and Woodland Routine Works and Open Space and Cemeteries.

It was recommended that the Committee:

1. Note the work carried out by the service within the local area; and
2. Advise of any areas that required further information or investigation.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an overview of the service activities within the ward for the period 1 April to 30 June 2018.

The report provided details of the property void and let performance for both mainstream tenancies and temporary tenancies.

There were 22 policy voids in the ward area. Reasons for policy voids included properties unable to be let due to health and safety reasons or property being held to assist with decants due to remedial works.

The report examined the ward arrears position and provided a table showing the number of tenants in arrears at the end of the first quarter of financial year 2018/19 compared to the same reporting period in 2017/18. Despite the ward having a strong rent collection rate of 97.0%, arrears had increased by £22,023 on 2017/18. Overall, the arrears position in West Lothian had also increased by £261,111 to £1,879,981. Officers would continue to focus on rent arrears and details of the ongoing initiatives to recover rents was given.

The report then gave an overview of the Bathgate area team activity along with an update on the new build and capital programme. No major capital programmes were taking place in the Bathgate area although a share of

planned and high value active repair programmes was taking place and senior and vulnerable tenants were benefitting from the assisted decoration scheme.

The report concluded with an update on the various tenant participation initiatives together with an overview of the work that had been carried out by the council officer based in the Safer Neighbourhood Team from April to June 2018.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. BATHGATE WARD SERVICE UPDATE

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing an update on progress towards developing a regeneration plan for the ward and other ward activity.

The report provided members with an overview of the number of visitors to the Partnership Centre between May to July 2018 and the various structure programmes that had taken place in the various services located within the centre during the reporting period along. Members noted that due to the implementation of Universal Credit, the number of enquiries received by the council services located within the centre had increased.

The report then provided an update on town centre related matters which were discussed through the regular meetings of the Bathgate Town Centre Management Group. The 2018 calendar of traditional summer events had been completed and arrangements were currently underway for the annual festive celebrations in the town. Officers would continue to work alongside local organisations, individuals, business community and residents to promote the town centre and its public realm areas for formal/informal use/events and members noted that the spaces had been used for a number of informal uses in recent months.

Officers had met with Reconnect Regal Theatre who had a wide range of aspirational plans to revitalise the theatre as a community arts and performance hub for Bathgate. They would host a pantomime and would provide opportunities for local schools and groups to attend special performances. A new logo had been adopted along with a branding exercise to relaunch the theatre.

The Bathgate Business Improvement District had held a ballot during Summer 2018, the outcome of which was to continue with the BID for a 3rd five year term from 1st September to 31st August 2023.

The committee noted that two further defibrillators had been installed within the town centre in recent months; one at Hugh Black & Son's on George Street and one at Bathgate railway station, both of which were externally wall mounted to provide 24/7 access. The George Street facility had been provided through the "Butchers at the Heart of Your

Community Initiative”.

The town centre update then concluded with information on a new bus route that had been launched by Lothian Country Buses which served the town centre with links to West Lothian and Edinburgh. Officers had supported the company through the facilitation of their service launch roadshow and local campaign, including a very successful promotional information even held in the town centre.

The report then moved on to provide members with an overview of the very busy programme of local groups, classes and other activities that had taken place at the Boghall Drop-In Centre including a full overview of the Summer activities programme. The homework club would resume after the school holidays and a new weekly “Press Gang” group would meet to produce a quarterly newsletter and a new monthly disco would be arranged for primary and secondary school children. Finally, the centre staff would be undertaking training through Police Scotland in October and November to allow them to become a Third Party reporting venue.

The report concluded with an update on progress towards developing regeneration plans in 8 key areas of deprivation across West Lothian. Community engagement activities were progressing well in Bathgate with continued work anticipated during the next two months to help to establish the local issues and their relative priority and importance to and within the local community in Bathgate. The area profile was complete and provided a range of supporting statistics on issues such as poverty, income, unemployment, health and access to services. It was envisaged that the local steering group would be reconvened in October to commence discussing the emerging issues highlighted by the engagement and to identify working actions and priorities for inclusion in the draft action plan, which would be presented to the committee in December.

Arising from a discussion, the BIDS Manager advised that street furniture removed during the recent precinct improvement works would be returned by the contractors during the week and would be stored at Eagle Brae until it had been assessed for reuse. Enterprising Bathgate had commenced discussions with their contractors to establish whether the street furniture they had installed on the precinct could be adapted to include backs and arms. The committee considered it was important for council officers, the Town Centre Management Group and Enterprising Bathgate to meet to agree where the street furniture that could be re-used should be placed.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. PENSIONERS’ GROUPS CHRISTMAS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2018

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of the groups invited to apply for the Pensioners’ Groups

Christmas Fund 2018 in the Bathgate ward, Livingston-wide groups and West Lothian-wide groups.

In 2018, the total amount available was £29,054 with the fund being divided by the total number of beneficiaries. Nine applications had been issued to groups across the Bathgate ward, with three returned to date. The intention was to support all nine groups upon submission of their application. Appendix 1 of the report details those groups proposed to be supported and the approximate number of beneficiaries in each. In addition, Rosemount Court had formally constituted a group that represented 65 residents. The BIDS Manager invited the committee to add the group to the list of organisations. The ward members agreed that Rosemount Court should be added the list of organisations eligible for funding and that the group should be invited to submit an application form for funding.

One application had also been sent to a Livingston-wide group and three applications to West Lothian-wide groups. The intention was to support all of these groups once the applications had been returned. Appendix 2 provided further details on those applications and the approximate number of beneficiaries.

The committee noted that a full report on the final allocations would be presented to the Voluntary Organisations PDSP later in the year with letters to be issued to groups in late October advising of the level of funding they would receive.

The report recommended that the committee note the fourteen groups within the ward that had been invited to apply to the fund and would be supported if applications were received and to include Rosemount Court on the list of providers.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and agreed to include Rosemount Court on the list of providers.

10. WORKPLAN

A copy of the Workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the Workplan.